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***IF THEY CAN'T DO ANY GOOD, THEY  
SHOULDN'T COME!***

**ETHICS OF EVALUATING IN CONFLICT  
ZONES: VIEWS FROM THE FIELD**

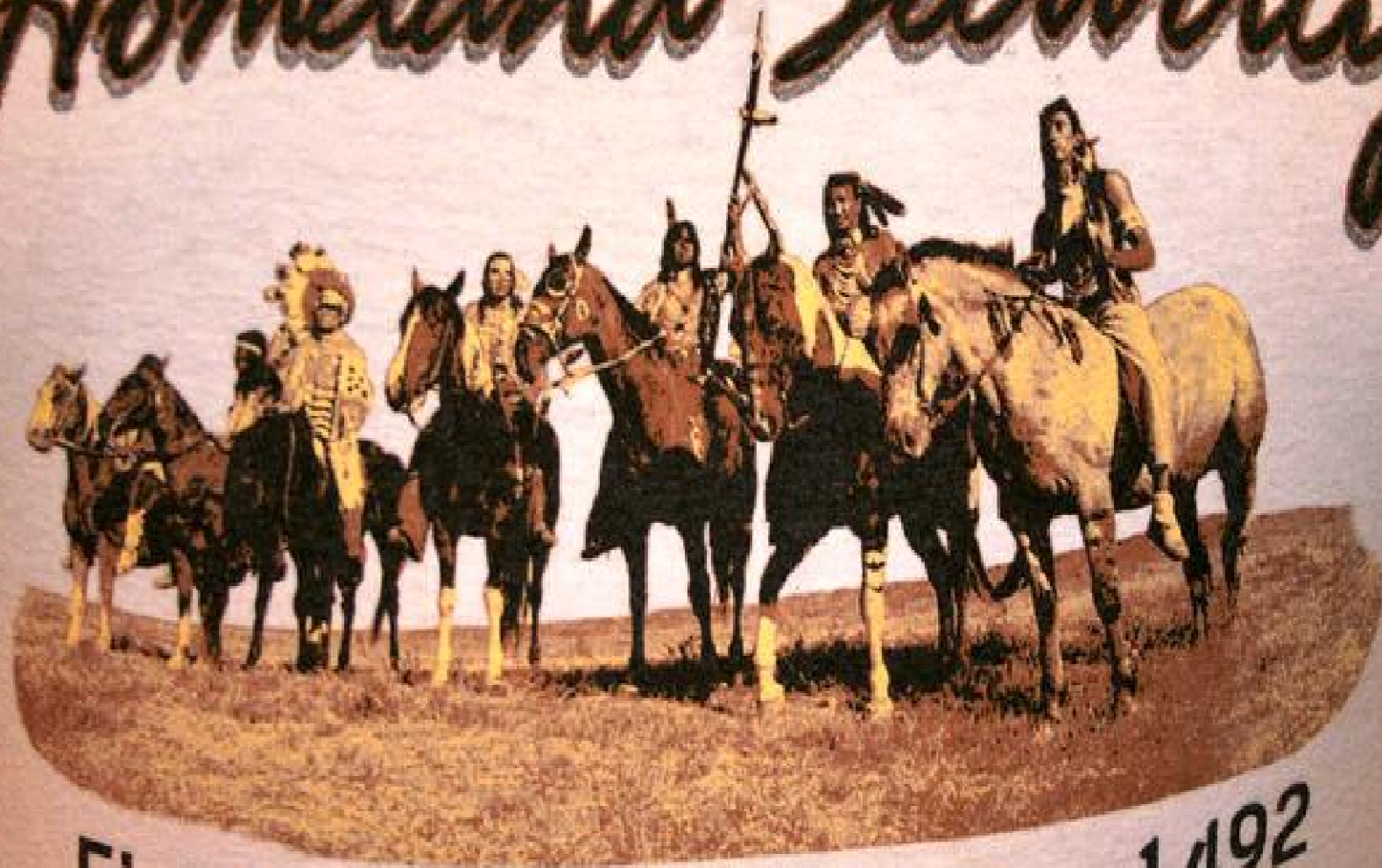
**JANAKA JAYAWICKRAMA, *PhD***

**NORTHUMBRIA UNIVERSITY**

**2011**



# Homeland Security



Fighting Terrorism Since 1492

# OUTLINE

- Ethics
- Differences of Perceptions
- Evaluation
- Projects in VDS
- People's Knowledge
- “Outsider” and “Insider”
- Do No Harm
- Concluding Remarks



# ETHICS

- Ethics along with logic, metaphysics and epistemology, is one of the main branches of Western scientific philosophy.
- It corresponds, in the knowledge division of the field into formal, natural and moral philosophy.
- However, this is not universal...

*“Then in the 1940s something called ‘independence’ happened. Then we also heard a thing called ‘development’. Our national leaders tried to ‘civilise’ us and ‘develop’ us. As a result we lost our livelihoods as well as our culture. Governments tried to bring us to heel using laws and regulations. We never had laws. We only had Sirith or customs. Laws are made by those who want to violate them. Sirith on the other hand cannot be ‘broken’. They can only be maintained. Both the natural world and our people were protected by these Sirith. What no one was successful in safeguarding through laws and regulations, we protected through our Sirith. All we ever wanted was to protect our customs, our culture and livelihoods. All we ask is that we are left alone.”*

Uruvarige Wanniyalatto: Leader of the most ancient people in  
Sri Lanka, 2002



# NON-WESTERN Vs WESTERN KNOWLEDGE

Traditional Knowledge	Scientific Knowledge
• assumed to be the truth	• assumed to be a best approximation
• spiritual	• secular only
• teaching through storytelling	• didactic
• learning by doing and experiencing	• learning by formal education
• Community-centred	• Individual-centred
• oral or visual	• written
• integrated, based on a whole system	• analytical, based on subsets of the whole
• intuitive	• model - or hypothesis - based
• holistic	• reductionist
• subjective	• objective
• experiential	• positivist

# EVALUATION

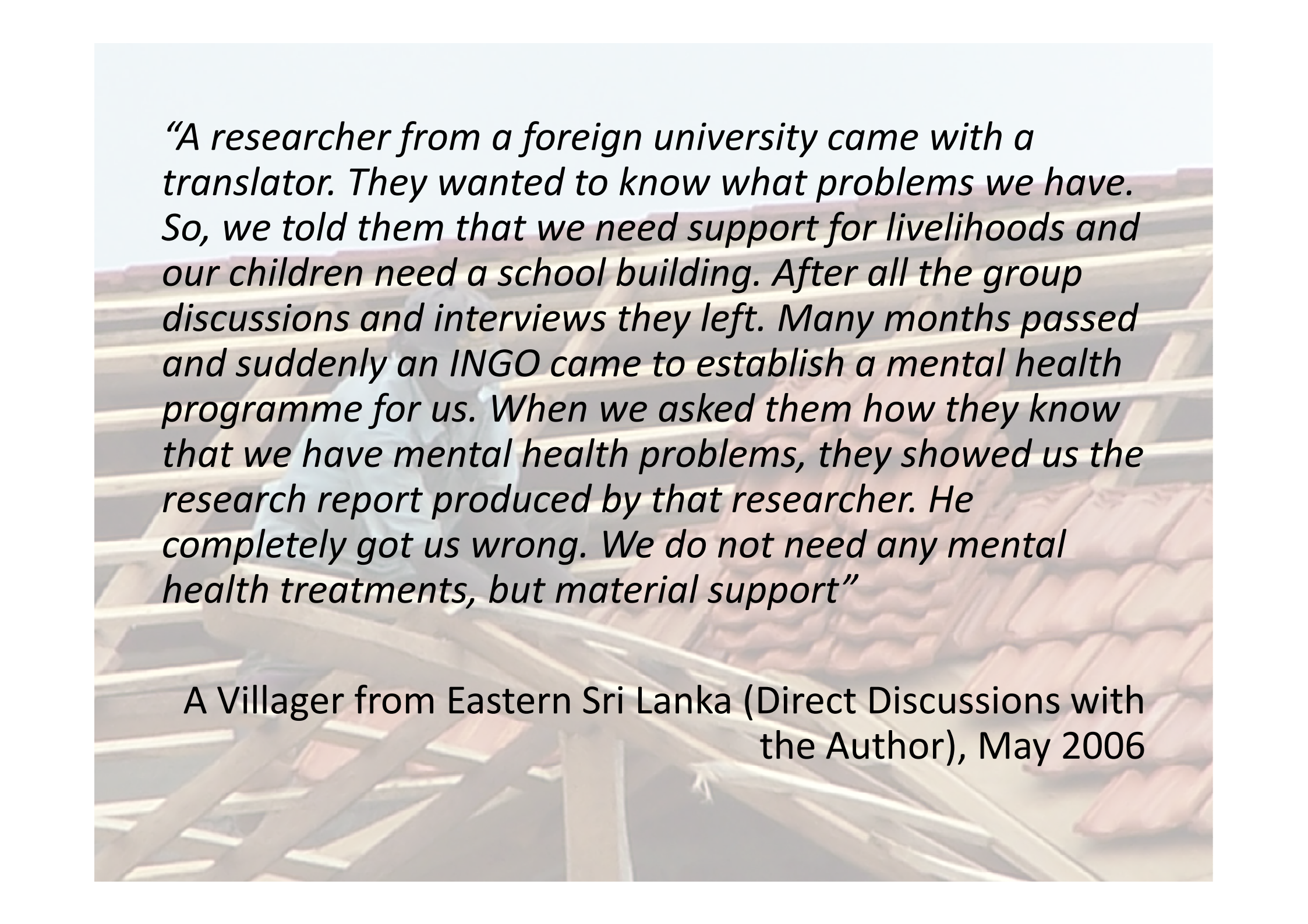
- OECD / DAC Criteria:
  - i. Impact
  - ii. Effectiveness
  - iii. Efficiency
  - iv. Relevance
  - v. Sustainability

(OECD-DAC, 2010)



# PROJECTS IN VDS

- Generated by external agencies for local communities.
- This creates strong insider and outsider tensions.
- This situation leads to a misdiagnosis of community situations and consequent misprescription of appropriate interventions.



*“A researcher from a foreign university came with a translator. They wanted to know what problems we have. So, we told them that we need support for livelihoods and our children need a school building. After all the group discussions and interviews they left. Many months passed and suddenly an INGO came to establish a mental health programme for us. When we asked them how they know that we have mental health problems, they showed us the research report produced by that researcher. He completely got us wrong. We do not need any mental health treatments, but material support”*

A Villager from Eastern Sri Lanka (Direct Discussions with the Author), May 2006

# PEOPLE'S KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS

*“... the legitimacy of the people's knowledge system. This is also equally the knowledge system of the poor. This knowledge and traditional technology can no longer be dismissed as romantic and unscientific. It can be a critical element in sustainable cost effective development and poverty eradication [as well as in conflict transformation].”*

Wignaraja, 2005, p.25





# PERCEPTION OF COMMUNITIES

*“These refugees are lazy people. They don’t want to be active and take responsibility of their lives. They always hide behind their cultures and traditions. Most men who participated in my research told me that they don’t like their wives to go to work, because there will be no one to look after children. Why can’t they be creative and start a day care centre?”*

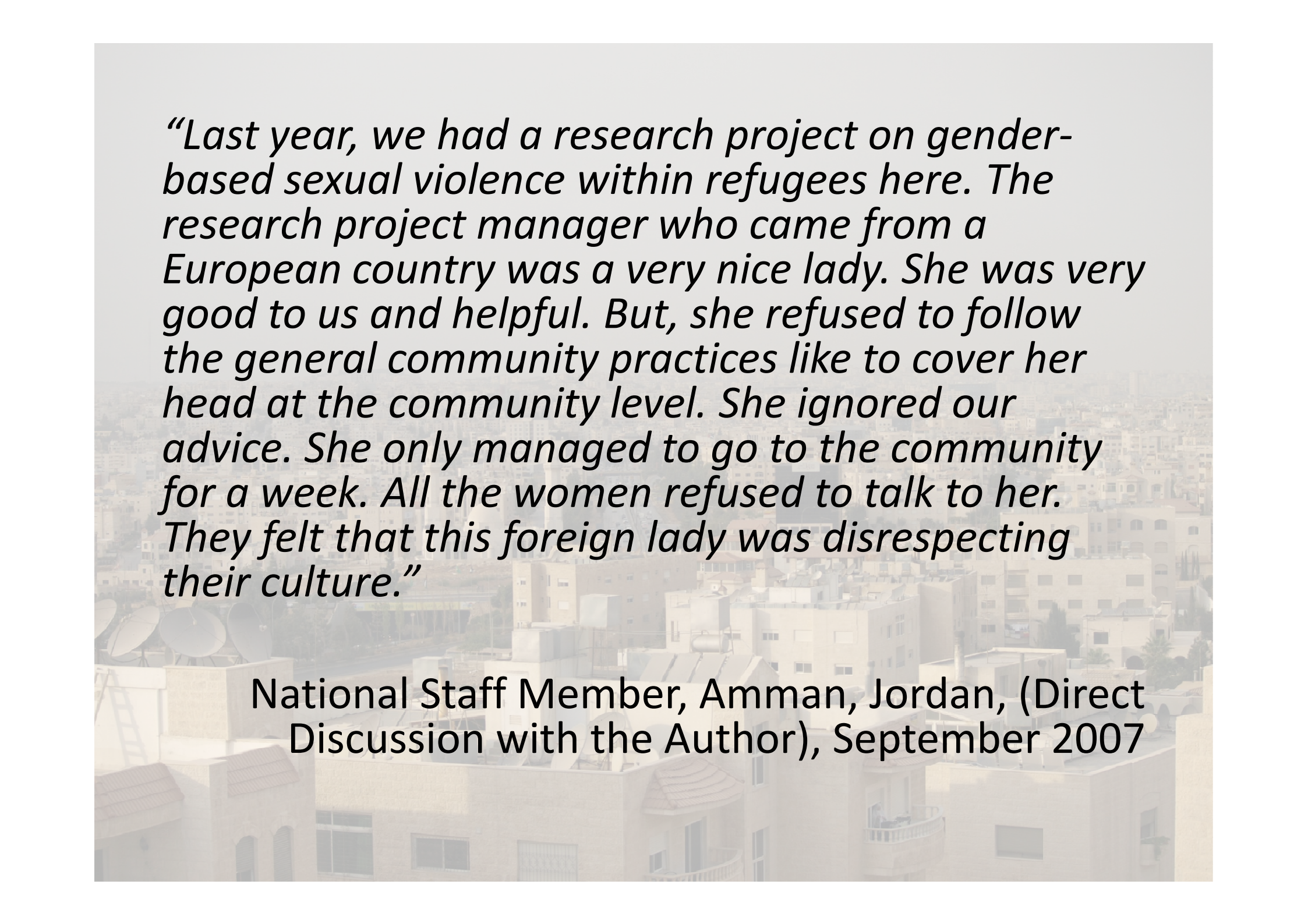
Researcher from a North American University, Lilongwe, Malawi, (Direct Discussion with the Author), October, 2006



# OUTSIDER AND INSIDER

*“Normal and shared moral experience of this sort [different from place to place] is so troubling precisely because what looks so wrong from the outside may not look that way from the inside. That is why, in this first sense, what is moral needs to be understood as what is local”*

Kleinman, 2006



*“Last year, we had a research project on gender-based sexual violence within refugees here. The research project manager who came from a European country was a very nice lady. She was very good to us and helpful. But, she refused to follow the general community practices like to cover her head at the community level. She ignored our advice. She only managed to go to the community for a week. All the women refused to talk to her. They felt that this foreign lady was disrespecting their culture.”*

National Staff Member, Amman, Jordan, (Direct Discussion with the Author), September 2007



# Do No HARM

- In the mid-1990s, the concept of “Do No Harm” became popular within the humanitarian policy and practice.
- Hippocratic Oath since 5<sup>th</sup> Century B.C
- Through the work of James Orbinski, though it was seized upon and globally marketed by Mary B. Anderson and her Collaborative for Development Action.

# Do No HARM

- Aims to recognize ways to delivering humanitarian and/ or development assistance in conflict affected communities.
- Encourage communities to disengage from the conflict and develop mechanisms to reduce the root causes of the conflicts within their societies, rather than contributing to the conflict.



# ***IF THEY CAN'T DO ANY GOOD, THEY SHOULDN'T COME!***

*“No one within our community requested these International organisations to come and help us. We have been surviving the conflict since 1980s and disasters since 1950s. Before 1990, we were helping each other and the few organisations in our area were listening to us. Now, it is different – all these foreigners and their assistant Sri Lankans who comes in Land Cruisers with questionnaires only want our information. Then they disappear and a new group comes. I think that if they can't do any good, they shouldn't come.”*

A farmer from conflict affected Eastern Sri Lanka (Direct Discussion with the Author), October 2005

**FROM A DIALOGUE WITH A FACILITATOR IN THE BHOOMI SENA  
SOCIAL MOVEMENT, MAHARASHTRA, INDIA 1978/79**

*“We need outside help for analysis and understanding of our situation and experience, but not for telling us what we should do. An outsider who comes with readymade solutions and advice is worse than useless. He must first understand from us what our questions are, and help us articulate the questions better, and then help us find solutions. Outsiders also have to change. He alone is a friend who helps us to think about our problems on our own.”*

Wignaraja et al., 1988

# CONCLUSION

- Value of exploring the voices of people in VDS.
- Building on existing structures.
- Cultural production.
- Social reproduction.
- Ethical frameworks and evaluation tools to be built-up in the project planning phase.

**Thank You**

